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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SAN JOSE 001061

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA: TITLE III SUSPENSION OF THE
LIBERTAD ACT

REF: A)STATE 65523, B) 2006 SAN JOSE 2734

¶1. Costa Rican President Oscar Arias remains one of the region's leading critics of the Castro government and a strong advocate for democratic change and human rights reforms in Cuba. Costa Rica shows no signs that it would consider re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Castro government, which were severed in 1961. The USG should encourage and bolster Costa Rica's continued support for democracy in Cuba. Suspending Title III of the Libertad Act in regard to Costa Rica remains in the USG national interest.

¶2. Costa Rica's pointed criticism of the Cuban administration has continued throughout the past six months. Costa Rica traded barbs with Cuba in December 2006 after President Arias likened Castro to Pinochet, declaring "Fidel Castro began with the firing squad, killing people who opposed him. There's no difference. The ideology is different but both were savages, brutal and bloody." The rhetoric began anew in April and May of 2007 when Castro weighed in on Costa Rica's pending referendum to ratify the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), declaring it an opportunity to show that the world rejects liberalization and stating further that the referendum would only approve CAFTA if fraud were involved. Arias responded by condemning Cuba's meddling in an internal democratic process, stating that Castro's comments "represent a serious affront on the residents of a sovereign, democratic, free and independent Costa Rica."

¶3. The following responses are keyed to Ref A questions:

- A) Post is unaware of any Costa Rican investments in Cuba.
- B) Post is unaware of any bilateral trade agreements between Costa Rica and Cuba.
- C) Post is unaware of any exchange programs between Costa Rica and Cuba. A limited number of Costa Rican students have accepted scholarships to study medicine and film in Cuba, but Post is unaware of any formal exchange or scholarship programs between Cuban and Costa Rican universities. Post is unaware of any Costa Ricans who have traveled to Cuba for medical treatment, given the availability of publicly subsidized health care in Costa Rica. At any given time, there are between six and ten Cuban doctors working in Costa Rican hospitals, most of them providing radiological treatment at Hospital Mexico in San Jose.
- D) Costa Rica has worked to promote democracy and human rights in Cuba. These efforts include President Arias's public statements (see above).
- E) Since our last Title III Suspension Report (in December, Ref B), there have been no/no high-level Costa Rican diplomatic visits to Cuba or high-level Cuban diplomatic visits to Costa Rica.

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